

The Tree of Vedic Literature

A detailed analysis explaining the importance and interrelation between various branches of Vedic texts.

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Lesson One: The Vedas

Veda means knowledge. The original knowledge is the teachings of the Vedas. In the conditioned state our knowledge is subjected to many deficiencies. There are four defects that a conditioned soul has: committing mistakes, subject to illusion, cheating propensity and imperfect senses. These deficiencies make us unfit for having perfect knowledge. Therefore we accept the Vedas as they are.

Vedas are apauruseya, which means they are not compilations of human knowledge. Vedic knowledge comes from the spiritual world, from Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the beginning the first living creature was Brahma. He received the Vedic knowledge from Krishna.

Vedas are compared to desire tree because they contain all things knowable by man. They deal with mundane necessities as well as spiritual realization. Above and beyond all

departments of knowledge there are specific directions for spiritual realization. Regulated knowledge involves a gradual raising of the living entity to the spiritual platform, through varna (brahmana - intellectual, ksatriya - ruler, vaisya - merchant, sudra - worker) and asrama (brahmacharya - student, grhastha - family, vanaprastha - retired, sannyasa - mendicant). The highest spiritual realization is knowledge that the Personality of Godhead is the reservoir of all pleasures, spiritual tastes.

Formerly there was only the Veda of the name Yajur. The sacrifices mentioned in the Vedas were means by which the people's occupations according to their orders of life (namely brahmacharya, grhastha, vanaprastha and sannyasa) could be purified. To simplify the process and make them more easily performable, Vyasadeva (the empowered incarnation of Krishna) divided the one Veda into four, Rg (prayers), Yajur (hymns for oblations), Sama (same prayers and hymns in meters for singing), Atharva (body/world maintenance and destruction) in order to expand them among men.

Thus the original source of knowledge is the Vedas. There are no branches of knowledge either mundane or transcendental, which do not belong to the original texts of the Vedas. They have simply been developed into different branches. They were originally rendered by great seers. In other words, the Vedic knowledge broken into different branches by different disciplic successions (known as sakhas) has been distributed all over the world. No one, therefore, can claim independent knowledge beyond the Vedas.

The texts of the Vedas are known as Samhitas. Within these Samhitas there are portions known as Mantras, which contain prayers in the form of potent sound compounds revealed to great seers for different purposes. In the Vedic civilization three orders of life lived in the forests. Only grhasthas inhabited the cities. The regulated knowledge for living in the city, is revealed in the books known as Brahmanas, whereas the regulated knowledge for living in the forest is revealed in the books known as Aranyakas.

Lesson Two: Sruti, Smrita and Nyaya

There are three different sources of vedic knowledge, called prasthanatraya. The Upanisads are known as sruti-prasthanas, the scriptures following the principles of six limbs of vedic knowledge (Vedangas) as well as Mahabharata, Bhagavad-gita, and Puranas are known as smrti-prasthanas and Vedanta-sutras which present the vedic knowledge on the basis of logic and arguments is known as nyaya-prasthanas. All scientific knowledge of transcendence must be supported by sruti, smrti and a sound logical basis (nyaya). Smrti and nyaya always confirm that which is said in the sruti.

Vedic injunctions are known as sruti. From the original Veda Samhitas up to the Upanisads are classified as sruti. The additional supplementary presentations of these principles as given by the great sages are known as smrti. They are considered as evidence for vedic principles. Understanding the ultimate goal of life is ascertained in the Vedanta-sutras by legitimate logic and argument concerning cause and effect.

There are six aspects of knowledge in the Vedas known as Vedangas:

Siksha - phonetic science
Vyakarana - grammar
Nirukti - context (conclusive meaning)
Candas - meter
Jyotis - time science (astronomy & astrology)
Kalpa - rituals

The seers who have realized these aspects of knowledge from the Vedas, have composed sutras (short but potent phrases which convey a lot of meanings) on each Vedanga. Kalpa-sutras are of four categories, viz., srouta (collective sacrifices), grhya (family rituals), dharma (occupational duties) and sulba (building of sacrificial fireplaces, altars etc.).

According to the different levels of conditioned consciousness there are instructions in the Vedas for worship of different controllers, with the aim of reaching different destinations and enjoying different standards of sense enjoyment. Agamas (emanated scriptures) are books which are classified into five for this purpose:

Energy - Sakti (Sakta Agamas)
Visible source (Sun) - Surya (Soura Agamas)
Controller - Ganapati (Ganapatya Agamas)
Destroyer - Siva (Saiva Agamas)
Ultimate source - Vishnu (Vaikhanasa Agamas)

For those who are below standard for vedic purificatory process, Lord Siva gave the Tantra sastras. These have two general classifications, right and left. While the right aspect contains regulations for purification for those who are grossly engaged in meat eating, intoxication and illicit sex, the left aspect contains low class activities like black magic etc.

From the point of view of common human activities sense gratification is the basis of material life. To cater to this aim, there are three paths mentioned in the Vedas:

The karma-kanda path involves fruitive activities to gain promotion to better planets. Using the methodology from the first five Vedangas, the Kalpa-sutras explain this path.

Upasana-kanda involves worshiping different controllers for promotion to their planets. The Agamas explain this path.

Jnana-kanda involves realizing the Absolute truth in impersonal feature for the purpose of becoming one. The Upanisads explain this path.

Though these paths are all from the Vedas, and the Vedas do explain them, one should not think that that is all the Vedas have. The real purpose of the Vedas is to gradually

push one in the path of self realization to the point of surrender in devotion al service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna.

Lesson Three: Upanishads and Darshanas (Vedanta and Six Systems of Philosophy)

Upanishad means receiving knowledge while sitting near the teacher. These are conversations between self realized souls and their students on the subject matter of Absolute truth. The philosophical aspects of all the important processes and practices of knowledge (known as vidyas) that are given in the Vedas are discussed in the Upanishads. Veda means knowledge and anta means end. Upanishads are known as Vedanta, end of knowledge.

In the Upanishads the description is more or less negation of the material conception of everything, up to the Supreme Lord. It is very important to note that there is no denial of the spiritual, absolute, transcendental conception in the Upanishads. The purpose of the Upanishads is to philosophically establish the personal feature of the Absolute Truth as transcendental to material names, forms, qualities and actions.

There are 108 Upanishads, as accepted by disciplic succession. Among them the following are considered as topmost:

- 1) Isa
- 2) Kena
- 3) katha
- 4) Prasna
- 5) Mundaka
- 6) Mandukya
- 7) Taittiriya
- 8) Aitareya
- 9) Chandogya
- 10) Brhad-aranyaka
- 11) Svetasvatara

Darshana means, sight or vision. In the Vedanta philosophy, the first question is, what is the source of everything? There are philosophers who saw different stages of the original source, and explained philosophy according to their vision. These are known as darshanas. They are also known as sad-darshanas (six systems of philosophy).

The six philosophical treatises are:

1. **Nyaya** propounded by Gautama
2. **Vaisesika** propounded by Kanada

3. **Sankhya** propounded by Kapila
4. **Yoga** propounded by Patanjali
5. **Purva (karma) Mimamsa** propounded by Jaimini
6. **Uttara (brahma) Mimamsa** propounded by Vyasa

Nyaya, the philosophy of logic, maintains that the atom is the cause of the cosmic manifestation.

Vaisesika, philosophy of specialised logic, maintains that the combination of atoms is the cause of the cosmic manifestation.

Sankhya, philosophy of analytical study, maintains that the material nature is the cause of the cosmic manifestation.

Yoga, philosophy of mystic perfections, maintains that universal consciousness is the cause of the cosmic manifestation.

Purva (karma) mimamsa, philosophy of actions and reactions, maintains that fruitive activities are the cause of the cosmic manifestation.

Uttara (brahma) mimamsa has two different categories:

The impersonalists maintain that the impersonal Brahman effulgence is the cause of the cosmic manifestation.

After studying the six philosophical theses, Vyasadeva completely summarized them all in his Vedanta-sutra darshana: The Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the cause of all causes.

Anyone who wants to establish his own philosophy certainly cannot explain any scripture according to the principle of direct interpretation. Among the six kinds of philosophers up to the impersonalist brahma-mimamsa philosophers, none really cares for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the cause of all causes. They are always busy refuting the philosophical theories of others and establishing their own.

Nyaya and Vaisesika philosophers by accepting atoms as source have rejected the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The Sankhya philosophers do not accept the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because after scrutinizingly analyzing the material elements, they have come to the conclusion that material nature is the cause of everything.

The Yoga philosophers imagine a form of the Absolute Truth within many forms, and thus do not give any information about the transcendental Personality of Godhead.

Purva (karma) mimamsa philosophers maintain that if there is a God, He is subjected to our fruitive activities. Therefore they do not see any need to become devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The impersonalist Uttara (brahma) mimamsa philosophers say that everything is an illusion. Headed by philosophers like Astavakra, they stress the impersonal Brahman effulgence as the cause of everything, rejecting the transcendental Personality of Godhead, who is also the source of that Brahman effulgence.

Srila Vyasadeva wrote the Vedanta-sutras and taking the essence of all vedic literature, established the supremacy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Lesson Four: Bhashyas (Commentaries on Vedanta Sutras)

Vyasadeva is an incarnation of Krishna. He compiled Vedanta-sutra to enable one to understand the Absolute Truth through infallible logic and argument.

Veda means knowledge, and anta means the end. In other words, proper understanding of the ultimate purpose of the Vedas is called Vedanta knowledge.

A sutra is a code that expresses the essence of all knowledge in a minimum of words. It must be universally applicable and faultless in its linguistic presentation; this is the definition of sutra according to Vayu and Skanda Puranas.

Knowledge which is given in the Vedanta-sutra is supported by the Upanisads. Vedanta-sutras are known as nyaya-prasthana, legitimate logic and argument concerning cause and effect giving the conclusive understanding of the sruti-prasthana, the Upanisads.

Vedanta-sutra, which consists of codes revealing the method of understanding Vedic knowledge, is the concise form of all Vedic knowledge. It begins with the words *athato brahma-jijnasa*: "Now is the time to inquire about the Absolute Truth". The human form of life is especially meant for this purpose, and therefore the Vedanta-sutra very concisely explains the human mission. According to the great dictionary compiler (Kosakara), Hemacandra, Vedanta refers to the purport of the Upanisads and the Brahmana portion of the Vedas.

The Vedanta-sutras are also known by the following different names:

- (1) Brahma-sutra
- (2) Saririka-sutra

- (3) Vyasa-sutra
- (4) Badarayana-sutra
- (5) Uttara-mimamsa
- (6) Vedanta-darsana

The Vedanta-sutra consists of four chapters. The first two chapters discuss the relationship of the living entity with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is known as sambandha-jnana, or the knowledge of relationship.

The third chapter describes how one can act in his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is called abhideya-jnana.

The fourth chapter describes the result of such action. This is known as prayojana-jnana.

Because the Vedanta-sutra is in codes which contain a lot of knowledge, it required commentaries (bhashyas).

Sripada Sankaracharya wrote his commentary on Vedanta-sutra based on monism (advaita - not two). He established that God and the living entity are one. Not accepting the transformation of the energy of Absolute Truth, which is the actual explanation of the Vedanta-sutra, he introduced the theory of illusion. He claimed that everything is one with Supreme.

There are other (theistic) commentaries by vaisnava acharyas:

- Nimbarka - dvaitadvaita (oneness and dualism)
- Vishnuswami - suddhadvaita (purified oneness)
- Ramanujacharya - visistadvaita (specific oneness)
- Madhvacharya - dvaita (dualism)
- Baladeva Vidyabhusana - acintya bhedabheda (inconceivable oneness and difference)

In each of these commentaries, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is established as the cause of all causes, the cosmic manifestation is established as transformation of His inconceivable energies, and devotional service is described very explicitly.

Lesson Five: Puranas, Itihasas and Kavyas

Puranas are compiled from related historical facts which explain the teachings of the four Vedas. In the Chandogya Upanisad, the Puranas and the Mahabharata, generally known as histories, are mentioned as the fifth Veda.

Srila Vyasadeva, due to his kindness and sympathy toward the fallen souls, supplemented the Vedas with Puranas which easily explain the Vedic truths, intended for different types of men.

All men are not equal. There are men who are conducted by the mode of goodness, others who are under the mode of passion and others who are under the mode of ignorance. The Puranas are so divided that any class of men can take advantage of them and gradually regain their original position and get out of the hard struggle for existence.

All the stories mentioned in the Puranas are actual histories, not only of this planet but also on millions of other planets within the universe.

In the Puranas, (which are classified under the three modes) as a matter of course, Srila Vyasadeva has certainly given descriptions of the glories of Krishna, but not as many as given to religiosity economic development, sense gratification and salvation . These four items are by far very inferior to engagement in the devotional service of the Lord.

Therefore, in the pure-goodness Purana, viz., Srimad Bhagavatam, Srila Vyasadeva proclaims that the prime necessity of human life is to realize one's eternal relationship with the Lord and thus surrender unto Him without delay.

Itihasas are literatures describing historical events pertaining to either a single hero or a few heroic personalities in a lineage: for example, Ramayana describing the pastimes of Sri Ramacandra and Mahabharata describing the pastimes of the Pandavas in the lineage of the Kurus. In these books there are topics on transcendental subjects along with material topics. The Bhagavad-gita is a part of Mahabharata. The whole idea of the Mahabharata culminates in the ultimate instructions of the Bhagavad-gita that one should give up all other engagements and should engage oneself solely and fully in surrendering unto the lotus feet of Krishna. The conclusive teaching of the Ramayana also is to fully surrender and take shelter of Lord Sri Ramacandra.

Kavyas are dramatic poetical presentations of selected histories from the Itihasas and/or Puranas, some examples are Raghuvamsa, Meghaduta, Sakuntala.

All the vedic literatures, are put into systematic order for the benefit of the fallen souls who are detached from the transcendental loving service of the Lord, It is the duty of the fallen souls to take advantage of such literatures and become freed from the bondage of material existence.

Lesson Six: Pancharatras

*pancharatrasya krtsnasya
vakta to bhagavan svayam*

The Pancharatra system is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead (just like the Bhagavad-gita); there are 108 Pancharatra books in which the system of worship of the Lord in His Deity form is explained to and through the great authorities of devotional service, viz., Lord Brahma, Lord Siva, Goddess Laksmi etc., Padma Pancharatra, Narada Pancharatra, Hayasirsa Pancharatra, Laksmi-tantra, and Mahesa Pancharatra are some of the most important books of Pancharatra.

Under the Vedic vidhi (rules) a student is required to be a bonafide son of a brahmana or twice born, but a sudra can be elevated to a brahmanas position by Pancaratrika vidhi.

As human society becomes degraded by the influence of the age of Kali, people become unfit for the vedic system. So the Pancharatra system of making one qualified by initiating him into the process of devotional service by which he is engaged fully in the service of the Deity form of the Lord is the only practical method for deliverance in this age of Kali.

Pancharatra books contain elaborate descriptions on the subject matter of the expansions and incarnations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, especially the Deity incarnations, detailed information on day to day worship of the Deity forms, methods of purification of the worshipper and process of practical meditation, process of installing temple and Deities, and instructions on how to conduct different festivals in glorification of the pastimes of the Lord.

In the four authorized sampradayas, the acharyas have compiled Deity worship manuals based on these Pancharatra books. Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu instructed Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami in the subject matter of Pancharatra and advised them to write books on this subject.

Srila Sanatana Goswami compiled Hari bhakti vilas, giving elaborate descriptions of vaisnava regulative principles and practice. Srila Rupa Goswami made his treatise on the subject, viz., Bhakti rasamrta sindhu with profound knowledge of revealed scriptures and authoritative references from various Vedic literatures, especially Narada Pancharatra.

Srila Prabhupada gave a summary study in prose on Bhakti rasamrta sindhu, in his book Nectar of Devotion. Thus the codes of conduct book for the Krishna conscious devotees, the Nectar of Devotion, is the Pancharatra book for the Krishna consciousness movement.

Lesson Seven: The Four Books

Krishna Consciousness or Prema Dharma is compared to a lotus flower that gradually unfolds in due course of time. At first it is manifest in a budding stage which gradually blooms until it reaches its fully blossomed stage.

Bhagavad-gita As It Is:

This book is the a, b, c book of spiritual education. This is the essence of the knowledge imparted in the Upanisads. Since Brahma-sutras give conclusive meaning to the Upanisads, Bhagavad-gita is also the essence of the subject matter of the Brahma-sutras. Vedic knowledge is complete because it is above all doubts and mistakes, and Bhagavad-gita is the essence of all such Vedic knowledge. Out of many standard and authoritative revealed scriptures, the Bhagavad-gita is the best.

In the present age people are so absorbed in mundane activities that it is not possible for them to read all the Vedic literatures. This one book, Bhagavad-gita As It Is will suffice because it is the essence of all vedic literatures and especially because it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The whole Bhagavad-gita centers around the declaration that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that the ultimate perfection of life for the living being is to fully surrender unto Him.

Nectar of devotion:

Bhaktirasamrta sindhu by Srila Rupa Goswami is a treatise on the codes of conduct of devotees compiled in Haribhakti vilas by Srila Sanatana Goswami. Srila Prabhupada gave a summary study of Bhaktirasamrta sindhu in his book Nectar of Devotion, thus providing the Pancaratra for the devotees of the Krishna consciousness movement.

The Nectar of Devotion teaches us how to turn that switch that will immediately brighten everything, everywhere, by engaging in the simple and natural method of loving Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Even those who are completely confused and frustrated in life, can extinguish immediately the fire of material existence burning within their hearts, by learning this art of devotional service as directed in the Nectar of Devotion.

The Nectar of Devotion is specifically presented for persons who are engaged in the Krishna Consciousness movement.

Srimad-Bhagavatam:

Within the Vedic literature, there are two systems of education. One deals with transcendental knowledge (para vidya) and the other with material knowledge (apara vidya). The Vedas and their corollaries the six Vedangas deal with the inferior system of material knowledge, viz, to improve religion (dharma), economic development (artha), sense gratification (kama), and liberation (moksa).

As far as Vedic literature is concerned, Vedanta-sutra is accepted as the para vidya. Srimad Bhagavatam is an explanation of that para vidya. It is the fully matured fruit of the desire tree known as Vedic literature.

Srila Prabhupada has given his Bhaktivedanta (devotional Vedanta) translations and purports on Srimad Bhagavatam as the graduate study for the devotees of the Krishna consciousness movement.

Sri Chaitanya Caritamrta:

Sri Krishna appeared as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to give practical demonstrations of the teachings He gave as Krishna. He relished the descriptions of Krishna lila given in the Srimad Bhagavatam by Vyasadeva.

Srila Vrndavan Das Thakur, the Vyasa of Chaitanya Bhagavata described Lord Chaitanya's pastimes. Following in his footsteps Sri Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami, composed Sri Chaitanya Caritamrta, in which the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu are described in great detail.

One begins with Bhagavad-gita and advances through Srimad Bhagavatam (for which conducting life according to the codes of Nectar of Devotion is a must), to the Chaitanya Caritamrta. Although all these great scriptures are on the same absolute level, for the sake of comparative study Chaitanya Caritamrta is considered to be on the highest platform.

Srila Prabhupada says in his preface to the Chaitanya Caritamrta, "I sincerely hope that by understanding the teachings of Lord Chaitanya human society will experience a new light of spiritual life which will open the field of activity of the pure soul."

Srila Prabhupada says in his purport to text 118 of chapter twenty-two, in the Madhya-lila of Sri Chaitanya Caritamrta:

"In our Krishna consciousness movement we have therefore limited our study of Vedic literatures to Bhagavad-gita, Srimad Bhagavatam, Sri Chaitanya Caritamrta and Bhaktirasamrta sindhu. These four works are sufficient for preaching purposes. They are adequate for the understanding of the philosophy and the spreading of missionary activities all over the world."

The whole ocean of Vedic literature is contained in these four books of Srila Prabhupada - as you have seen through these lessons. If a student sincerely studies these four books analytically and systematically, then these four books are enough..

Lesson One: Introduction to Bhagavad Gita

Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavan. He spoke Bhagavad-gita to Arjuna, who is in a direct relationship with Krishna as His friend and devotee. Only by the process of devotional service can one revive one's relationship with Krishna. Therefore, Bhagavad-gita should be taken up in a spirit of devotion.

Everyone is full of anxiety because of the material existence. The cause of suffering and the actual destination of life are proper subjects of enquiry. Krishna answered these questions, through Bhagavad Gita, and thus relieved Arjuna from all material miseries by making him understand his constitutional position.

The following is a summary of Sri Krishna's explanations of Absolute Truth in Bhagavad-gita:

Sri Krishna is the Supreme enjoyer, controller and friend of all. Nature (*prakṛti*) is His energy. Jiva, the individual living entity, is part and parcel of His spiritual (internal) energy. Material nature (constituted of three qualities or modes viz., *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*) consisting of eight elements namely earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind intelligence and false ego, is His external energy. By a combination of the three modes of material nature and under the control of time (which is another energy of Krishna) there are activities and resultant reactions. Material nature is real and eternal, whereas the manifestation of the material world (of these activities and reactions) is real but temporary.

The Supreme conscious Lord Krishna, is conscious of all the bodies, everything and every atom. Even when He appears within the material creation in any form, His consciousness is never materially affected. Jiva is only conscious of his own body. Matter is unconscious, without the presence of jiva.

Due to material pollution of the consciousness, the living entity is entangled in bodily actions and reactions which are actually carried on by the modes of material nature. This pollution can be purified by dovetailing the activities in full co-operation with the will of Krishna. These activities in pure consciousness called bhakti are transcendental to the three modes and thus the performer becomes free from actions and reactions. In this liberated stage one attains his constitutional position as servant of Sri Krishna.

All the planets within material existence have the material miseries of repeated birth, death, old age and disease. The spiritual world has no such inebrieties. Following in the footsteps of Arjuna, if we act according to Krishna's instructions, we can attain the abode of Krishna from where we never have to return to this material world.

Our thinking, which is now absorbed in material energy, must be transferred to the spiritual energy. This is made possible by practicing to remember Sri Krishna by always chanting His names (which are spiritual, non-different from the Lord) and molding our life's activities in such a way that we can remember Him always.

It is Krishna's instructions that this process must be learnt by rendering service to and enquiring submissively from a self realized soul, in an unbroken disciplic succession from Krishna.

Vedic knowledge is infallible, above all doubts and mistakes. The purpose of Vedic knowledge is to know the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna reveals this knowledge through Bhagavad-gita. Therefore, Bhagavad-gita should be accepted 'as it is' without interpretation, deletion or addition.

Lesson Two: Gita chapters 1 to 3

As the opposing armies stand poised for battle in Kuruksetra, Arjuna the mighty warrior, sees his enemies who are all his intimate relatives, teachers and friends. Overcome by grief and pity, his mind bewildering, Arjuna fails in his strength and gives up his determination to fight.

Arjuna submits himself to Lord Krishna as His disciple and Krishna begins His teachings by explaining the fundamental distinctions between the temporary material body and the eternal spiritual soul. The Lord explains the transmigration, the nature of the selfless service and the characteristics of a self-realized person.

A self-realized person is not diverted by various types of fruitive activities because he is firmly situated in self, the soul - as part and parcel of Krishna. The revival of such relationship is the highest perfectional stage of all vedic knowledge.

It is not possible to curb the forces of sense gratification by human endeavor. The senses require real engagement. By using everything in the service of the Lord one can save oneself from becoming the victim of material consciousness. Thus by the strength of Krishna consciousness one should direct his steady intelligence towards his pure identity.

Lesson Three: Gita chapters 4 to 6

The principles of religion are direct orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, laid down in the Vedas, that push one towards complete surrender unto Him. Whenever such principles are disturbed by the demoniac the Lord appears in His own spiritual energy.

The truth about the appearance and activities of Krishna, when known can free one from the cycle of birth and death. Such knowledge should be gained by hearing from self realized soul. Material attachments make one bereft of such knowledge.

Negligence of spiritual life, fear of spiritual identity and the conception of void that arises from frustration in life are three kinds of material attachments. To become free from these material conceptions one should take shelter of the Lord, in Krishna consciousness. Krishna consciousness is gradually awakened by different types of sacrifices. All sacrifices are based on regulated actions, where the important factor is self realization.

Devotional activities to satisfy Krishna, strengthen one's knowledge of self, and the complete knowledge of the Lord as the supreme controller and enjoyer of all sacrifices. By becoming perfect in such devotional life one attains liberation in Krishna even while performing service with the material body. Thus the culmination of all kinds of yoga practices is bhakti yoga. Hearing the transcendental names and activities of Krishna is an expert treatment for the mad mind and eating foodstuff offered to Krishna is the appropriate diet for the disease of material existence. This treatment is the process of Krishna consciousness, the real and topmost yoga system for this age.

Lesson Four: Gita chapters 7 to 10

There is no truth superior to Krishna. Everything rests upon Krishna as pearls strung on a thread. Though everything comes from Him, He is fully independent. He is the controller of the three modes that delude everyone in the material existence. So, those who surrender to Him can cross over His divine energy.

Grossly foolish, lowest among mankind, those whose knowledge is stolen by illusion and those who willfully take to demoniac nature do not surrender to Krishna. Those who are distressed, who desire wealth, who are inquisitive and who seek knowledge surrender to Krishna.

The material manifestation is temporary. It is periodically created and annihilated. Any place within the material existence is full of miseries where repeated birth and death take place. But those who surrender to Krishna, can cross this ocean of birth and death and attain the Lord's abode which is eternal and transcendental. He is attainable only by unalloyed devotional service.

Sense enjoyment through the Vedas results in repeated birth and death. Since Krishna is the supreme controller those who worship the demigods are worshipping Him only, but in a wrong way. They take birth among the demigods as much as the worshipers of ancestors and ghosts take birth amongst them. But those who worship Krishna attain Him. Krishna can be worshiped with genuine love by offering even a leaf, a drop of water, a fruit or a flower.

If one does not become perfect in worshipping Krishna in one life, he can continue from where he left off in his next life. There is no loss or diminution for devotional service.

All wondrous displays of beauty, grandeur or sublimity, either in the material or spiritual world, are but partial manifestations of Krishna's divine energies and opulences. As the supreme cause of all causes and the support and essence of everything Krishna is the Supreme object of worship for all beings.

Lesson Five: Gita chapters 10 to 13

Lord Krishna grants Arjuna divine vision and reveals His spectacular, unlimited form as the cosmic universe. Thus He conclusively establishes His divinity. Krishna explains that His own, all beautiful human-like form is the original form of Godhead, One can perceive this form only by pure devotional service.

The universal form is material and temporary, just as the material world is temporary. A devotee is not much interested in the universal form, for it does not enable one to reciprocate loving feelings.

Bhakti yoga, loving devotional service to Lord Krishna, is the highest and the most expedient means for attaining pure love for Krishna, which is the highest conclusion of spiritual existence. Those who follow this supreme path develop divine qualities.

One should be attracted to the personal form of Krishna, for that is the highest spiritual realization. The path of impersonalism is troublesome for those who have a body. As far as a devotee is concerned, Krishna Himself delivers His pure devotee. Therefore one should not try to deliver himself in spiritual realization. Everyone must take shelter of the supreme omnipotent Godhead, Krishna, by practicing the process of Krishna consciousness and fully engaging himself in devotional service.

To reach the highest goal, Krishna, there are two processes:

Renouncing the fruits of one's activity and coming to knowledge by such renunciation, and then to the stage of meditation and then to the stage of understanding Supersoul and, at last, approaching the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the step by step, indirect process.

Devotional service is the direct method. In this process there are two stages. To practice the regulative principles of Bhakti yoga under the guidance of an expert spiritual master for the purification of the senses is the first stage. In this stage, one can finally develop an attachment for Krishna. In the second stage, when that attachment develops into a natural transcendental love for Krishna, one is in direct relationship with the Supreme Lord in devotional service.

The preliminary stage of understanding devotional service perfectly, is known as knowledge. In terms of Vedic literatures, perfect knowledge of the constitution of the body, the constitution of the soul, and the constitution of the Supersoul is that knowledge.

The purpose of knowledge is to understand distinctly that the living entity has by chance fallen into the material existence. If he reverts to spiritual or Krishna consciousness by the process of devotional service, then it is certain that he will never come again into this material existence. He will be transferred to the spiritual world for a blissful, eternal life of knowledge

Lesson Six: Gita chapters 14 to 16

Krishna is the seed giving father of all the living beings conceived by the material nature. When the living beings come into contact with the material nature they become conditioned by the three modes, goodness, passion and ignorance.

Goodness conditions one to happiness, passion to fruitive actions and ignorance covers one's knowledge and binds one to madness. Those in goodness go upward to the higher planets; those in passion come back to earthly life. Those in ignorance go down to hellish worlds.

In his constitutional position a living entity is above the three modes of material nature. By engagement in devotional service in full Krishna consciousness, he is immediately re-situated in the transcendental position and his unlawful desire to control the material nature is removed. Therefore the process of devotional service beginning with hearing, chanting and remembering should be practiced in the association of devotees under the guidance of the spiritual master. Thus one can become firmly situated in Krishna's transcendental loving service.

The purpose of the Vedas is to cut down the illusory tree of the material world and attain the real tree of the spiritual world. The problems of material existence are due to weakness of the heart. By understanding the philosophy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and engaging in His service, everyone can become free from this weakness.

Everything comes from Krishna; He is the maintainer of the world. He is the object of all the Vedas. He is the source of the Supersoul too. He is celebrated both in this world and in the Vedas as the Supreme Person. One who knows Krishna as such is the knower of everything. Therefore he engages in His service and attains to His eternal abode.

Those who are in the modes of passion and ignorance deride the scriptures, deride the holy men and deride the proper understanding of Krishna. They are not attracted to devotional service. Gradually they sink down to the most abominable type of existence and thus lose the chance of approaching Krishna. But there are others who develop the divine qualities and gradually become situated in realization of Krishna. In dividing the divine and demoniac natures there is no other criteria but obedience to the regulative principles of scriptures.

Lesson Seven: Gita chapters 17 to 18

The living being is originally a part and parcel of the Supreme Lord. Therefore one is originally transcendental to all the modes of material nature. So, when one forgets his constitutional position, influenced by goodness, passion and ignorance one develops resultant artificial faiths which are material. In goodness one worships demigods, in passion powerful humans and demons, and in the mode of ignorance the ghosts and spirits.

The real principle of religious faith is situated in the mode of pure goodness. But because the heart is tainted we find different types of religious principles. According to different types of faith based on different modes of nature there are different kinds of worship.

In the pursuit of all Vedic instructions, the ultimate goal is the understanding of Krishna. One can achieve faith in Krishna by accepting the proper spiritual master and receiving training under his direction. When that faith matures, in course of time, it is called love of God. This is the ultimate goal of all living entities. One should, therefore, take to Krishna consciousness directly.

One who surrenders to Krishna does not have to execute so many different methods. That simple surrender unto Krishna will save him from unnecessarily wasting time.

One can thus make all progress at once and be freed from all sinful reactions. If one is perplexed about giving up all kinds of religious forms and simply surrendering unto Krishna, such worry is useless, because Krishna says, "**Do not worry.**"

Anyone who tries sincerely to present Bhagavad-gita as it is, will advance in devotional activities and reach to the pure devotional state of life. As a result of such pure devotion, by chanting *hare krishna hare krishna krishna krishna hare hare / hare rama hare rama rama rama hare hare* and engaging all his senses in active devotional service, he is sure to go back home, back to Godhead.

Studies in Consciousness: Lesson One

*yadoparamo manaso nama-rupa-
rupasya drsta-smrti-sampramosat
ya iyate kevalaya sva samsthaya
hamsaya tasmai suci-sadmane namah*

"When one's consciousness is completely purified of the contamination of material existence, gross and subtle, without being agitated as in the working and dreaming states, and when the mind is not dissolved as in *susupti*, deep sleep, one comes to the platform of trance. Then one's material vision and the memories of the mind, which manifests names and forms, are vanquished. Only in such a trance is the Supreme Personality of Godhead revealed. Thus let us offer our respectful obeisances unto that uncontaminated, transcendental state."

In our gross conditional stage we perceive things through material experience and remembrance, and in the subtle stage we perceive the world in dreams. The process of vision also involves remembrance and also exists in subtle form. Above gross experience and dreams is *susupti*, deep sleep, and when one comes to the completely spiritual platform, transcending deep sleep, he attains trance, *visuddha-sattva*, or *vasudeva-sattva*, in which the Personality of Godhead is revealed.

Atah sri-krishna-namadi na bhaved grahyam indriyaih: as long as one is situated in duality, on the sensual platform, gross or subtle, realisation of the original Personality of Godhead is impossible. *Sevonmukhe hi jihvadau svayam eva sphuraty adah*: but when one engages his senses in the service of the Lord - specifically when one engages the tongue in chanting Hare Krishna mantra and tasting only Krishna prasada with a spirit of service - the Supreme Personality of Godhead is revealed. This is indicated in this verse by the word *suci-sadmane*. Suci means purified. By the spirit of rendering service with one's senses, one's entire existence becomes *suci-sadma*, the platform of uncontaminated purity.

Studies in Consciousness: Lesson Two

*yathajnas tamasa yukta
upaste vyaktam eva hi
na veda purvam aparam
nasta-janma-smrtia tatha*

"As a sleeping person acts according to the body manifest in his dreams and accepts it to be himself, so one identifies with his present body, which he acquired because of his past religious or irreligious actions, and is unable to know his past or future lives."

A man engages in sinful activities because he does not know what he did in his past life to get his present materially conditioned body, which is subject to the threefold miseries. As stated by Rishabhadeva in Srimad Bhagavatam (5.5.4), *nunum pramattah kurute vikarma*: a human being who is mad after sense gratification does not hesitate to act sinfully. *Yad indriya-pritaya aprnoti*: he performs sinful actions simply for sense gratification. *Na sadhu manye*: that is not good. *Yata atmano 'yam asann apildesada asa dehah*: because of such sinful actions, one receives another body in which to suffer as he is suffering in his present body because of his past sinful activities.

It should be understood that a person who does not have Vedic knowledge always acts in ignorance of what he did in the past, what he is doing in the present and how he will suffer in the future. He is completely in darkness. Therefore the Vedic injunction is, *tamasi ma*: "Don't remain in the darkness." *Jyotir gama*: "Try to go to the light." The light or illumination is Vedic knowledge, which one can understand when he is elevated to the mode of goodness or when he transcends the mode of goodness by engaging in devotional service to the spiritual master and the Supreme Lord.

This is described in the Svetasvatara Upanisad (6.23):

*yasya deve para bhaktir
yatha deve tatha gurau
tasyaite kathita hy arthah
prakasante mahatmanah*

"Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed."

The Vedas enjoin, *tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet*: one must approach a spiritual master who has full knowledge of the Vedas and be faithfully directed by him in order to become a devotee of the Lord. Then the knowledge of the Vedas will be revealed. When the Vedic knowledge is revealed, one need no longer in the darkness of material nature.

According to his association with the material modes of nature - goodness, passion and ignorance - a living entity gets a particular type of body. The example of one who associates with the mode of goodness is a qualified brahmana. Such a brahmana knows past, present and future because he consults the Vedic literature and sees through the eyes of sastra (*sastra-caksuh*). He can understand what his past life was, why he is in the present body, and how he can attain liberation from the clutches of maya and not accept a material body. This is all possible when one is situated in the mode of goodness. Generally, however, the living entities are generally engrossed in the three modes of passion and ignorance.

In any case, one receives an inferior or superior body at the discretion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Paramatma, as stated in the Srimad Bhagavatam:

*manasaiva pure devah
purva-rupam vipasyati
anumimamsate 'purvam
manasa bhagavan ajah*

Everything depends on Bhagavan, or *ajah*, the unborn. Why doesn't one please Bhagavan to receive a better body? The answer is *ajnas tamasa*: because of gross ignorance. One who is in complete darkness can not know what his past life was or what his next life will be; he is simply interested in his present body. Even though he has a human body, a person in the mode of ignorance and interested only in his present body is like an animal, for an animal, being covered by ignorance, thinks that the ultimate goal of life and happiness is to eat as much as possible. A human being must be educated to understand his past life and how he can endeavor for a better life in the future. There is even a book, called *bhṛigu-saṁhitā*, which reveals information about one's past, present and future lives according to astrological calculations.

Somehow or other one must be enlightened about his past, present and future. One who is interested only in his present body and who tries to enjoy his senses to the fullest extent is understood to be engrossed in the mode of ignorance. His future is very, very dark. Indeed, the future is always dark for one who is grossly covered by ignorance, and therefore everyone thinks his present body to be everything, without consideration of the past or future.

Studies in Consciousness: Lesson Three

*pradhana-kalasaya-dharma-sangrahe
sarira esa pratipadya cetanam
kriya-phalatvena vibhur vibhavyate
yathanalo darusu tad-gunatmakah*

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead is all-pervading, but He is also manifested in different types of bodies which arise from a combination of material nature, time, desires and occupational duties. Thus different types of consciousness develop, just as fire, which is basically the same, blazes in different ways according to the shape and dimension of the firewood."

The Supreme Personality of Godhead constantly lives with the individual soul as Paramatma. The individual soul has awareness in accordance with his material body, which he attains by virtue of *prakriti*, or material nature. The material ingredients are activated by the force of time, and thus the three material modes of nature are manifested. According to his association with the three modes of material nature, the living entity develops a particular type of body. In animal life, the material mode of ignorance is so prominent that there is very little chance of realizing Paramatma, who is also present within the heart of the animal; but in the human form of life, because of the developed consciousness (*cetanam*), one can be transferred from ignorance and passion to goodness by the results of his activities (*kriya-phalatvena*). A human being is therefore advised to associate with spiritually advanced personalities. The Vedas (Mundaka Upanisad 1.2.12) give the direction *tad vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet*: in order to reach the perfection of life or to understand the real constitutional position of the living entity, one must approach the spiritual master. *Gurum evabhigacchet* - one must; its not optional. It is imperative that one approach a spiritual master, for by such association one proportionately develops his consciousness towards the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The highest perfection of such consciousness is called Krishna consciousness. According to the body given by *prakriti*, or nature, one's consciousness is present, according to the development of consciousness, one's activities are performed; and according to the purity of such activities, one realizes the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is present in everyone's heart. The example given herein is very appropriate. Fire is always the same, but according to the size of the fuel or burning wood, the fire appears to be straight, curved, small, big, etc.

According to the development of consciousness, God realization is present. In the human form of life it is recommended, therefore, that one undergo the different types of penances and austerities described in Bhagavad-gita (karma-yoga, jnana-yoga, dhyana-yoga, and bhakti-yoga). Like a staircase, yoga has different steps for reaching the topmost floor, and according to one's position on the staircase, he is understood to be situated in karma-yoga, jnana-yoga, dhyana-yoga, or bhakti-yoga. Of course, bhakti-yoga is the topmost step on the staircase of realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In other words, according to one's development in consciousness, one realizes his spiritual identity, and thus when one's existential position is purified fully, he becomes situated in brahmananda, which is ultimately unlimited. Therefore the sankirtana movement contributed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead as Lord Chaitanya is the direct and

easiest process for coming to the purest form of consciousness - Krishna consciousness, the platform which the Supreme Personality is fully realized. Directions for performing different types of yajnas are specifically arranged for the highest realization of the Supreme Lord, as confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita by the Lord Himself. *Ye yatha mam prapadyante tams tathaiva bhajamy aham* (Bg. 4.11). The Supreme Personality of Godhead is realized according to one's surrender. Full surrender, however, occurs when a man is perfectly in knowledge. *Bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyate* (Bg. 7.19)

In other words, the consciousness of both the soul and the Supersoul is all-pervading; the limited consciousness of the living entity is pervading the entire material body, and the supreme consciousness of the Lord is pervading the entire universe. Because the soul is present within the body, consciousness pervades the entire body; similarly, because the supreme soul, or Krishna, is present within this universe, everything is working in order. *Mayadhyaksena prakrtih suyate sa caracaram*: "This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kunti, and it is producing all moving and unmoving beings." (Bg. 9.10)

Studies in Consciousness: Lesson Four

*nivrtta-buddhy-avasthanam
duri-bhutanya-darsanam
upalabhyatmanatmanam
caksusevarkam atma-drk*

"One should be situated in the transcendental position, beyond the stages of material consciousness, and should be aloof from all other conceptions of life. Thus realizing freedom from false ego, one should see his own self just as he sees the sun in the sky."

Consciousness acts in three stages under the material conception of life. When we are awake, consciousness acts in a particular way, when we are in deep sleep, consciousness acts still another way. To become Krishna conscious, one has to become transcendental to these three stages of consciousness. Our present consciousness should be freed from all perceptions of life other than consciousness of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

This is called *duri-bhutanya-darsanam*, which means that when one attains perfect Krishna consciousness he does not see anything but Krishna. In the Chaitanya-caritamrta it is said that the perfect devotee may see many movable and immovable objects, but in everything he sees that the energy of Krishna is acting. As soon as he remembers the energy of Krishna, He immediately remembers Krishna in His personal form. Therefore in all his observations he sees Krishna only. In the Brahma-samhita (5.38) it is stated that when one's eyes are smeared with love of Krishna (*premanjana-cchurita*), he always sees Krishna, outside and inside. This is confirmed herein; one should be freed from all other vision, and in that way he is freed from the false egoistic identification and sees himself as the eternal servitor of the Lord. *Caksusevarkam*: as we can see the sun without a doubt,

one who is fully developed in Krishna consciousness sees Krishna and His energy. By this vision one becomes atma-drk, or self-realized. When the false ego of identifying the body with the self is removed, actual vision of life is perceivable. The senses, therefore, also become purified. Real service of the Lord begins when the senses are purified. One does not have to stop the activities of the senses, but the false ego of identifying with the body has to be removed. Then the senses automatically become purified, and with purified senses one can actually discharge devotional service.

Life Sciences from the Bhagavata Purana

Lesson One:

*dhanvantaris ca bhagavan svayam eva kirtir
namna nram pururujam ruja asu hanti
yajne ca bhagam amrtayur avavarundha
ayusya vedam anusasty avatirya loke*

"The Lord in His incarnation of Dhanvantari very quickly cures the diseases of the ever diseased living entities simply by His fame personified and only because of Him do the demigods achieve long lives. Thus the Personality of Godhead becomes ever glorified. He also exacted a share from the sacrifices, and it is He only who inaugurated the medical science or the knowledge of medicine in the universe."

- Srimad Bhagavatam 2.7.22

As stated in the beginning of Srimad-Bhagavatam, everything emanates from the ultimate source: the Personality of Godhead. It is therefore understood in this verse that medical science or knowledge in medicine was also inaugurated by the Personality of Godhead.

The body is a symbol of diseases. The disease may differ from one variety to another, but disease must be there just as there is birth and death for everyone. So by the grace of the Personality of Godhead, diseases of body and mind are cured. Not only are diseases of the body and mind cured, but also the soul is relieved of the constant repetition of birth and death. The name of the Lord as the source of curing the disease of material existence is also called bhavausadhi, or the source of curing the disease of material existence.

Cosmic and Unit Physiology

A) Panca bhutas (Five Great elements)

From all the authoritative statements of the great sages, the Vedic hymns and the aphorisms of the Vedanta sutra, the components of this world can be understood as follows: First there are earth, water, fire, air and ether. These are the five great elements (maha bhuta).

The color of these five elements are :

earth - golden
water - crystal
fire - red
air - blue
ether - smoke

The gross body of the living being is made of these five elements, as follows (Bhag. 2.10.31):

The thin layer on the skin (tvak), skin (carma), flesh (mamsa), blood (rudhira), fat (medah), marrow (majja), and bone (asthi), come from earth, water and fire.

The living force (prana) comes from sky, water and air.

B) Suksma bhutas (subtle elements)

The subtle body of the living being consists of Mind (manas), Intelligence (buddhi) and False Ego (ahankara).

The eight elements earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego are all products of the Lord's inferior energy (aparaa-prakrti), whereas the living entities, who are seen to utilize the inferior energy, originally belong to the superior energy (paraa-prakrti), the internal potency of the Lord. The eight inferior energies work grossly and subtly, whereas the superior energy works as the central generating force. This is experienced in the human body. The gross elements, namely earth etc., form the external gross body and are like a coat, whereas the subtle mind and false ego act like the under clothing of the body.

C) The creative energies

Before the creation or manifestation of the material cosmic world, the Lord exists as total energy (maha samasti), and thus desiring Himself to be diffused to many, He expands Himself further into multitotal energy (samasti). From the multitotal energy He further expands Himself into individuals in three dimensions, namely adhyatmic, adhidaivic and adhibhautic (vyasti).

As such, the whole creation and the creative energies are non-different and different simultaneously. Because everything is an emanation from Him (the Maha Vishnu or Maha samasti), none of the cosmic energies are different from Him. But all such expanded energies display specific functions as designed by the Lord, and therefore they are simultaneously different from the Lord. The living entities are also a similar energy (marginal potency) of the Lord, and thus they are simultaneously one with and different from Him.

D) The process of creation (Bhag. 2.2.28)

A part of material nature, after being initiated by the Lord is known as mahat tattva.

A fractional portion of the mahat tattva is called the false ego.

A portion of the ego is the vibration of sound.

A portion of sound is atmospheric air.

A portion of the airy atmosphere is turned into forms.

The forms constitute the power of electricity or heat.

Heat produces the smell of the aroma of the earth.

Gross earth is produced by this aroma.

All these combined together constitute the cosmic phenomenon.

E) The modes of material nature

Mahat tattva or the great causal truth, transforms into false ego, which is manifested in three phases, cause, effect and the doer. All such activities are on the mental plane and are based on the material elements, gross senses and mental speculation. The false ego is represented in three modes - goodness, passion and ignorance.

Every living being is under the plan of his natural inclinations in terms of the modes of material nature. His work is manifested in terms of the nature of the three modes, his form and bodily features are designed according to his work, and his name is designated according to his bodily features.

F) The body and the modes

The sense organs are attached to the modes of material nature, and the modes of material nature are products of the false ego. The mind is subjected to all kinds of material experiences (happiness and distress), and the intelligence is the feature of the mind's deliberation.

G) Consciousness

Consciousness is the sign of the living entity, or the soul. The existence of the soul is manifest in the form of consciousness, called jnanasakti. Total consciousness is that of the gigantic virat rupa, and the same consciousness is exhibited in individual persons.

H) Self-identification

This consciousness is divided into three modes of self-identification according to the proportion of purity: adhyatmika or self-identification with the body and mind, adhibhautika or self-identification with the material products, and adhidaivika self-identification is the beginning of purity of consciousness in pursuance of the desire of the Lord.

Avatar - the Science of the Lord's Descent: Lesson One

[- A.T. Das]

In the Srimad Bhagavatam it is stated,

*anye ca samskrtatmano
vidhina abhihitena te
yajanti tvan mayas tvamvai
bahumurty ekamurtikam*

“Lord Krishna says: There are others, who are purified and cultured souls, who by understanding my different forms as myself, as one personality in various forms and features, worship me according to their spiritual understanding and convictions following the rules of worship as given in the Vedas.”

Each process of worship given in the vedic scriptures involves understanding the different forms of the Lord, but the ultimate purpose is to worship the same one Supreme Lord Himself.

The various forms of the Lord which are unlimited but one and the same are described in the vedic literatures as follows:

Sri Krishna , the Supreme Personality of Godhead manifests Himself in three features in His transcendental form:

svayam rupa - His personal form,

tad ekatma rupa - different form but Himself,

avesa rupa - form into which He has entered.

The *svayam rupa* is the form in which Sri Krishna is directly understood, His personal form.

The *tad ekatma rupa* is that form which most resembles the *svayam rupa*, but there are some differences in the bodily features.

The *avesa rupa* is when Krishna enters either his own expansions or some suitable qualified living entity to represent Himself in any one or more of His opulences or powers. This is also known as *saktyavesa* incarnation.

Vasudeva, the identity by which Lord Sri Krishna is known as the original Personality of Godhead, thus expands Himself by innumerable forms, which are all transcendental to matter, known as *sat* (eternally existent), *chit* (fully conscious) and *ananda* (fully blissful).

The personal form of Krishna can be divided into two: *svayam rupa* and *svayam prakasa*.

As far as His *svayam rupa* or pastime form is concerned , it is in this form that He remains always in His personal abode, Vrindavana, with the inhabitants of Vrindavana (*vraja vasis*).

This *svayam rupa* form can be further divided into *prabhava* and *vaibhava* forms:

(a) When Krishna expanded Himself into multiple forms during the rasa dance in order to dance with each and every *gopi* who took part in the dance. (*prabhava* expansions)

(b) At Dwaraka Krishna expanded Himself into 16,108 forms in order to accommodate His 16,108 wives. Each such expansion was a separate individual, unlike when some yogis expand themselves into eight forms where all of them act as one individual (if one walks the others have to, if one sits the others also sit etc).

When Narada (who is himself a yogi, who can do such tricks like expanding bodily features into eight forms) visited Dwaraka, he was so astonished to see that in each of the 16,108 palaces , Sri Krishna was acting in different ways with His queens. In one palace He was engaged in playing with His children, and in yet another form He was performing some household work. (*vaibhava* expansions)

Each of these categories can also be further divided into *prabhava prakasa* (pastime manifestation forms), *prabhava vilasa* (pastime extension forms), *vaibhava prakasa* (emotional manifestation forms) and *vaibhava vilasa* (emotional extension forms):

a) When Akrura was accompanying both Krishna and Balarama to Mathura from Gokula, he entered into the waters of the Yamuna river and saw within the waters of Yamuna all the planets of the spiritual realm. He saw the Vishnu form as well as Narada and the four Kumaras who were worshiping him. This is a *prabhava prakasa* category of expansion.

b) When Krishna appeared before His mother Devaki in His four handed form of Narayana just before His divine birth in Mathura, He appeared in His *prabhava prakasa* form.

c) When he changed Himself to a two handed form at the request of His parents, He appeared in His *vaibhava prakasa* form.

d) In His personal form, Krishna is just like a cowherd boy and He thinks of Himself in that way. This is a *vaibhava prakasa*.

e) When He is in Mathura as a *ksatriya* prince He thinks and acts as a princely administrator. This is a *vaibhava vilasa* form. (In this Vasudeva form, sometimes He gets attracted to His own cowherd boy form, as described in some vaishnava literatures).

The Lord performs many wonderful pastimes in His incarnations in the material realm. The different aspects of these pastimes are each a manifestation of certain qualities of the different categories of his expansions in the spiritual realm. Thus many categories of expansions of the Lord may manifest themselves within a particular incarnation in order to perform certain pastimes. These pastimes exhibit the distinct qualities of that category of expansion.

There are also forms of Krishna which are a little different from the *svayam rupa* category. These are known as *tad eka atma rupa* forms (same person with different features).

These are further classified into *vilasa* (expansion form) and *svamsa* (own portion) forms.

Due to the distinct features both these classifications can be further divided into *prabhava* and *vaibhava* forms.

When Krishna expands Himself into Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Sankarsana He appears as *prabhava vilasa*, under *tad eka atma rupa* category.

From these original principal four handed forms there are twenty four principal forms manifest, which are *vaibhava vilasa* under *tad ekatma rupa* category.

In the Siddhartha samhita the twenty four forms are named according to the position of symbols (viz, conch, disc, mace and lotus) in Their four hands.

These twenty-four forms are known as *prabhava vilasa* forms identified by the symbols held in Their four hands.

The four principal manifestations of Krishna are found in each planet in the spiritual realm, and these planets are called Narayanaloka or Vaikunthaloka.

In the Vaikuntha loka He is manifested in the four-handed form of Narayana. From each Narayana the forms of Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are manifested.

The Narayana is the center and the four forms of Vasudeva , Sankarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha surround the Narayana form.

Each one of these four forms again expand into three:

Vasudeva - Kesava, Narayana, Madhava

Sankarsana - Govinda*, Vishnu, Madhusudana

Pradyumna - Trivikrama, Vamana, Sridhara

Aniruddha - Hrsikesa, Padmanabha, Damodhara

[*This Govinda is a four handed form different from the *vaibhava prakasa* Govinda, son of Nanda Maharaja, in Vrindavana.]

The four principal manifestations also have their *vilasa* (expansion) forms:

Vasudeva - Adhoksaja, Purusottama

Sankarsana - Upendra, Acyuta

Pradyumna - Nrsimha, Janardhana

Aniruddha - Hari, Krishna*

[*This Krishna is four handed vilasa form, different from the original *svayam rupa* form of Krishna.]

In the Hayasirsa Pancaratra it is mentioned that there are nine other forms protecting the Mathura and Dvaraka portions: Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha protect Mathura; Narayana, Nrsimha, Hayagriva, Varaha and Brahma (this is a four handed form of Krishna different from the creator Brahma who is a jiva) protect Dvaraka. These nine forms are different manifestations of *prakasa* and *vilasa* forms of Lord Krishna, distinct from the expansions with same names mentioned before in the tables above.

In the spiritual realm all the planets dominated by the Narayana features are eternal. The topmost planet is called Krishnaloka (Goloka) and is divided into three portions: Gokula, Mathura and Dvaraka.

The conclusion is that the Supreme Original Personality of Godhead is Krishna. He is called *lila-purusottama* (playful perfect person) and He resides principally as the son of Nanda. He has innumerable forms and categorically they are described in various scriptures especially the Pancaratra scriptures.

[About Vedic, Pancaratric and Tantric scriptures refer to the course on Vedic literature.]

All of these forms have their Vaikunta planets in the spiritual realm and are situated in eight different directions. Although all of them are ever situated in the spiritual realm, some of them are nonetheless manifest in the material world also.

The different categories of expansions in the Spiritual world are simply to facilitate the relationships with his separated expansions (the living beings in the spiritual realm) through various mellows.

To cite a few examples:

The *svayam rupa* form (the simple cowherd boy form) of the Lord is to enhance the parental affection of Nanda and Yasoda who are His eternal parents in the Vrindavana portion of Goloka.

The *prabhava* expansions of the Lord in the *rasa lila* are to enhance the conjugal satisfaction of the *gopis* with whom He dances.

The *vaibhava* expansion of the Lord in Mathura as a prince is to enhance the parental affection of Devaki and Vasudeva.

Some of the Lord's forms expand throughout the material realm as deity incarnations (*arca-avatara*) to protect various areas. These deity incarnations are manifested to give facility to the devotees of the Lord so that they can worship Him in that particular deity form to whom they have developed attraction.

For example, Hayasirsa in Bhadrasva-varsa, Matsya in Ramyaka-varsa, Kesava in Mathura and Padmanabha in Anandaranya (Trivandrum).

In the Mathura portion of the Goloka (the topmost abode of Krishna in the spiritual realm) a form known as Kesava is situated. This form is also represented in earthly Mathura. Similarly there is a Purusottama form in the spiritual realm at the outskirts of Goloka which is represented in Jagannatha Puri on our earth. Some other examples of this kind of representation are the Padmanabha in Anandaranya (Trivandrum of Kerala in India), and Hari in Mayapur (near Calcutta in West Bengal in India) which is the birth place of Lord Sri Chaitanya.

Many other forms are also situated in various places on earth. Not only in this Universe but in all other universes as well, the forms of Krishna are distributed everywhere.

It is indicated that this earth is divided into seven islands, which are the seven continents, and it is understood that on each and every island there are similar forms, but in the recent past these seem to be present only in India. From the vedic literatures we can understand that there are forms in other parts of the world also.

Through the activities of the worldwide Hare Krishna Movement, many of these places are very recently retraced and the worship of various forms of Lord Sri Krishna are re-established on almost all the continents of the earth.

The different forms of Krishna which are distributed thus throughout the universe are there to give pleasure to the devotees. It is not that devotees are only in the eastern world

or in India. There are devotees in all parts of the world, but at times they simply forget their identity. These forms manifest not only to give pleasure to the devotees but to reestablish the constitutional devotional service and perform other activities which vitally concern the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*yada yada hi dharmasya
glanir bhavati bharata
abhyutthanam adharmasya
tadatmanam srijamy aham*

“Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion - at that time I descend Myself.”

*paritranaya sadhunam
vinashaya ca duskritam
dharma-samstapanarthaya
sambhavami yuge yuge*

“To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium.”

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvah
tyaktva deham punar janma
naiti mam eti s’orjuna*

“One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna.”

- Bhagavad-gita 4.7-9

The Brahma samhita (5.46) says:

*diparcir eva hi dasantaram abhyupetya
dipayate vivrta-hetu-samana-dharma
yas tadrg eva hi ca visnutaya vibhati
govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami*

“The light of one candle being communicated to other candles, although it burns separately in them, is the same in its quality. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda who exhibits Himself equally in the same mobile manner in His various manifestations.”

Such expansion of forms are made possible by His various energies. His energies are also multifarious, and His internal energies are superior and external energies are inferior in quality.

As explained in Bhagavad Gita (7.4-6):

*bhumir apo 'nalo vayuh
kham mano buddhir eva ca
ahankara itiyam me
bhinna prakritir astadha*

“Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego - all together these eight constitute My separated material energies.”

*apareyam itas tv anyam
prakritim viddhi me param
jiva-bhutam maha-baho
yayedam dharyate jagat*

“Besides these, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature.”

*etad-yonini bhutani
sarvanity upadharaya
aham krtsnasya jagatah
prabhavah pralayas tatha*

“All created beings have their source in these two natures. Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both the origin and the dissolution.”

Thus His expansions of various forms which take place via His internal energies are superior forms whereas the expansions which take place via the external energies are inferior forms.

The living entities are also His expansions. The living entities who are expanded by His internal potency are eternally liberated persons, whereas those who are expanded in terms of the material energies are eternally conditioned souls.

In a prison house, there are the prisoners who are undergoing punishment and the managers who staff the prison house. Even though both these categories are bound by the laws of prison house ordained by the king, the prisoners have no freedom and are there for punishment (the conditioned souls in the material world, expanded in terms of external energy).

The managers have freedom, they are there simply to make sure that the law and order is maintained (the invisible controllers of the material world, known as demigods. Also expanded in terms of external energy).

Sometimes a missionary comes to preach to the prisoners, he also has to follow a certain code of behavior under the laws of the prison, but he is free and he tries to correct the prisoners so that they can become free or at least behave better so that they won't suffer too much in the prison (the eternally liberated souls, expanded in terms of internal energy, who come to deliver the conditioned souls from the material creation are like these missionaries).

But the king himself sometimes visits the prison house. He is never bound by the laws of the prison, neither he needs to follow any code of conduct while visiting the prison. He is totally above all the laws of prison, and simply he visits so that everything goes on properly as ordained by his law. (The Lord is like the king, always transcendental to the laws of the material world).

The Lord is all spiritual and has nothing to do with the qualities of the material world, which are qualitatively distinct from the all spiritual qualities of the Lord. Because the causal and effectual energies required for the creation of the material world are also His energies, fully under His control, He is never affected by the material modes of nature. His position is always transcendental even within the material manifestation.

He is also superior and transcendental to the eternally liberated souls who are expanded by His internal energy because He is the Purusa uttama (Perfect Original Person, source of both internal and external energies):

*dvav imau purushau loke
ksaras caksara eva ca
ksarah sarvani bhutani
kuta-stho 'ksara ucyate*

“There are two classes of beings, the fallible and the infallible. In the material world every living being is fallible, and in the spiritual world every living entity is called infallible.”

- Bhagavad-gita 15.16

*yasmad ksaram atito 'ham
Aksarad api cottamah
Ato 'smi loke vede ca
Prathitah purusottamah*

“Because I am transcendental, beyond both the fallible and the infallible, and because I am the greatest, I am celebrated both in the world and in the Vedas as the Supreme Person.”

- Bhagavad-gita 15.18

The living entities are separated parts and parcels of the Lord, and the conditioned living entities, who are unfit for the spiritual realm, are strewn within the material world to fulfill their desire to enjoy matter to the fullest extent.

As the eternal friend of the living entities, the Lord expands as Paramatama the Supersoul (one of His plenary portions). Accompanying the living entities to guide them in their pursuit of material enjoyment and to become witness to all their activities, so that they can reap suitable reactions for their material activities in their multiple lives in matter.

The Mundaka Upanisad 3.1.1 describes the soul and Supersoul as two birds in a tree. One eating the fruit of the tree while the other is just witnessing the actions.

*cva suparna sayuja sakhya samanam vrksam parisasvajate
tayor anyan papplam svadv atty anasnann anyo ' abhicakasita*

Thus the conditioned soul is controlled by the laws of material nature, but the Supersoul is the controller of both the spiritual and material energies.

Thus Vasudeva, the original Personality of Godhead by one of His plenary parts expands Himself all over the material world not only by accompanying the conditioned soul in all lives in different material bodies (numbering in 8,400,000 species), but also within the atoms, which combine to form the material bodies and the whole material universe. Matter, antimatter, proton, neutron etc are all simply different effects of this Supersoul, or Paramatma feature of the Lord.

The gross material bodies of the living entities are combination (in different proportions) of five gross elements (the atoms which are pervaded by His presence within them) and the subtle bodies consist of mind , intelligence and false identity (which are directed by His presence as Supersoul , Paramatma).

Bhagavad gita confirms that the Lord is the father of all living entities who are conceived within the womb of the material nature:

*sarva-yonisu kaunteya
murtayah sambhavanti yah
tasam brahma mahad yonir
aham bija pradhah pita*

“It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kunti, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father.”

- Bhagavad-gita 14.4

Since the living beings are His sons, the sufferings and enjoyments of the sons are also indirectly the sufferings and enjoyments of the father, even though the Father is not anyway directly affected. Being so kind He accompanies the living being as Supersoul always trying to divert the attention of them towards their constitutional nature, which is one of real happiness, ananda (bliss).

There are innumerable material universes, and in each and every universe there are innumerable planets inhabited by different grades of living entities in different modes of nature, in 8,400,000 species of bodies. The Lord incarnates Himself in each and every one of them and in each and every type of living species. He manifests His transcendental pastimes amongst them just to create a desire in them to go back to the spiritual realm, back home, back to Godhead.

This science of incarnations, their appearance and disappearance is nicely described in the Gopala Tapani Upanisad as follows:

*avirbhava tirobhava svapade
tisthati tamasi rajasi satviki
manusi vijñānadhana anandadhana
saccidanandaikarase bhaktiyoge tisthati*

The Lord does not change His original transcendental position, but He appears to be differently manifested according to the particular time, circumstance and society. He is understood by the linking process of Bhakti, pure devotional service.

Whatever conditions the living beings undergo in the material realm due to their imprisoned situations, the Lord also manifests His incarnations pertaining to those situations. Starting from the one cell entity known as *indragopa* up to the most elevated Brahma (the demigod in charge of creation), different sages have observed different types and numbers of incarnations , which are revealed in the vedic literatures.

They are seen as eight, ten, eighteen and twenty four types by different scriptures.

In the Caturveda Sikha it is stated:

*vasudeva sankarsana pradyumno' niruddhoham
matsya kurma varaho nrsmho vamano rama
ramo buddha kalkir aham iti*

“The Supreme Lord Sri Krishna said: I am Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Sankarsana. I am also the ten incarnations, viz., Matsya, Kurma , Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasurama , Ramacandra , Buddha, and Kalki.”

Ten different definite conditions of living beings are construed generally, from the beginning of their bondage up to the end .

Invertebrate - Matsya

Testaceous, shelly - Kurma

Vertebrate - Varaha

Correctly vertebrate, Half man half beast - Narasimha

Manikin - Vamana

Barbaric - Parasurama

Civilized - Ramacandra

Wise - Krishna

Ultra-wise - Buddha

Destructive - Kalki

Sometimes He incarnates Himself or empowers some suitable living being to act for Him (*sakty avesha avatara* - empowered incarnation). In either case the purpose is one and the same. The suffering living being should go back home, back to Godhead. The happiness that the living beings are hankering for is not to be found within any corner of the innumerable universes in any material planet. The eternal happiness which the living being wants is only obtainable in the kingdom of God, but the forgetful living beings under the influence of the material modes have no information of the kingdom of God.

The Lord therefore, comes to propagate the message of the kingdom of God, either personally as an incarnation or through His bona fide representative as the good son of God. Such incarnations or sons of God are not making propaganda for going back to Godhead not only within the human society, but also amongst the higher human beings called demigods as well as amongst lower species such as animal, plant, bird, insect and aquatic. This is how the vedic literatures describe the descents of the Lord, the Incarnations.

There are also *svamsa* (His own, unseparated) forms of Krishna, different from the forms in the spiritual realm, and these have two divisions, the *Sankarsana* division and the *lila* (pastime) *avatara* (incarnations) division.

From the *Sankarsana* division come the three *purusa-avatars* (Personalities who are the source and control for material creation) and from the *lila avatara* division come the incarnations like *matsya*-fish, *kurma*-tortoise etc.

The Satvata tantra describes that Krishna's energies are divided into three aspects: thinking, feeling and acting. He is known differently in these three aspects:

Thinking - Krishna

Feeling - Vasudeva

Acting - Sankarsana Balarama

The material creation is due to the thinking, feeling and acting of Sankarsana Balarama.

Even though there is no creation in the spiritual realm where everything is eternal, the whole spiritual realm also depends on the acting energy of Balarama. Everything there is manifested by the Balarama or Sankarsana form.

As far as the material creation is concerned, the forms by which the energy of material nature works to bring about creation is called the Sankarsana form, and it is understood that this cosmic manifestation is created under the superintendence of the Supreme Lord.

This is further explained in the Srimad Bhagavata Purana (10.46.31):

*etam hi visvasya ca bija-yoni
ramo mukundah purusah pradhanam
anviya bhutesu vilaksanasya
jnanasya cesata imau puranau*

“These two Lords, Mukunda and Balarama, are each the seed and womb of the universe, the creator and His creative potency. They enter the hearts of every living beings and control their conditioned awareness. They are the primeval Supreme.”

Avatara - the Science of the Lord's Descent: Lesson Two

[- A.T. Das]

There are six kinds of incarnations:

- 1) the **purusa avataras**
- 2) the **lila avatararas**
- 3) the **guna avataras**
- 4) the **manvantara avataras**
- 5) the **yuga avataras**
- 6) the **saktyavesa avataras**

1) Purusa avataras:

Krishna first incarnates as the three *purusa avataras* namely:

Karanodakasayi Vishnu - "The Lord who is lying on the causal ocean".

Garbhodakasayi Vishnu - "The Lord who is lying on the universal ocean".

Ksirodakasayi Vishnu - "The Lord who is lying on the milk ocean".

This is described in the Satvata tantra.

Karanodakasayi Vishnu, (Maha Vishnu) - the first purusa incarnation.

The expansions of Krishna who come to the material creation are called avataras or incarnations.

This means ‘one who descends from the spiritual realm’. From the innumerable planets in the spiritual sky, some expansions of the Lord descend into the universes.

The first descent of the Supreme Personality of Godhead from the expansion of Sankarsana (Balarama) is the first purusa incarnation, known as Maha Vishnu, or Karanodakasayi Vishnu. It is confirmed in the Srimad Bhagavata Purana (1.3.1):

*jagrhe paurusam rupam
bhagavan mahad-adibhih
sambhutam sodasa-kalam
adau loka-sisrksaya*

“In the beginning of the creation, the Lord first expanded Himself in the universal form of the purusa incarnation and manifested all the ingredients for the material creation. And thus at first there was the creation of the sixteen principles of material action. This was for the purpose of creating the material universe.”

Maha Vishnu lies within the Causal ocean - this ocean is the spiritual water that emanates from the gigantic body of Maha Vishnu, in which all the universes are floating.

Electrified by the power of Maha Vishnu the material nature at once creates innumerable universes in this ocean. Thus it is called as Karana - Causal ocean.

He is the original incarnation within the material world. He is the Lord of time, nature, cause and effect, mind, ego, the five elements, the three modes of material nature , the five senses, and the universal form.

Although He is the master of all objects movable and immovable in the material world, He is totally independent.

The material creation is effected by the interaction of the three modes of material nature set in action by the Lord. He exists before the modes of material nature are set in motion.

The sruti mantra confirms this: that only Narayana (one who lies in the water emanating from His body - i.e., Maha Vishnu) existed before the creation:

*eko vai narayana asin na brahma na isano napo nagni-samau neme dyav-aprithivi na
naksatrani na suryah*

"In the begining of the creation there was only the Supreme Personality Narayana. There was no brahma, no Siva, no fire, no moon, no stars in the sky, no sun."

Srimad Bhagavatam (2.9.10) describes the Causal ocean:

*pravartate yatra rajas tamas tayoh
sattvam ca misram na ca kala-vikramah
na yatra maya kim utapare harer
anuvrata yatra surasurachitah*

“In that personal abode of the Lord, the material modes of ignorance and passion do not prevail, nor is there any of their influence in goodness. There is no predominance of the influence of time, so what to speak of the illusory, external energy; it cannot enter that region. Without discrimination, both the demigods and the demons worship the Lord as devotees.”

The first purusa avatara, Maha Vishnu glances over the material nature , and the material nature becomes agitated by this glance. Thus the Purusa avatara impregnates matter with living entities. This act of glancing is described in the Upanisads “*sa iksate*”

Simply by the glance of the first purusa incarnation, consciousness becomes present within the matter . This consciousness is known as *mahat tattva*. This created consciousness is then divided into three departmental activities according to the three *gunas*, goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and ignorance(*tamas*), the modes of material nature.

The cosmic manifestation is a combination of all three modes and their products of creation and in this way innumerable universes are created.

By the breathing of Maha Vishnu all the universes are generated in seed form and gradually develop into gigantic forms with innumerable planets within each and every universe. The seeds of universe s develop into gigantic forms in the same way as seeds of a banyan tree develop into numberless banyan trees.

These universes are produced from the pores of the body of Maha Vishnu. As He breathes out, they come out and when he inhales they enter into Him again. So the duration of existence of each universe is only a breath time of the first purusa incarnation, Maha Vishnu.

In the Brahma samhita it is stated:

*yasyaika-nisvasita-kalam athavalambya
jivanti loma-vilaja jagad-anda-nathah*

*visnur mahan sa iha yasya kala-viseso
govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami*

“Brahma and other lords of the mundane worlds, appearing from the pores of hair of Maha-Vishnu, remain alive as long as the duration of one exhalation of the later [Maha-Vishnu]. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda of whose subjective personality Maha-Vishnu is the portion of portion.”

Thus Mahavisnu by breathing causes the seeds of universes to come out of the pores of His gigantic body, and by glancing impregnates the material nature with living entities.

All of the energies of Maha Vishnu are totally spiritual, and they have nothing to do with the material energy.

The process by which He interacts with the material energy for the purpose of creation, namely impregnating the material nature with the living beings and the universal seeds will be explained in the *guna avatara* section.

Garbhodakasayi Vishnu - the second *purusa* incarnation:

The second *purusa* incarnation enters into each and every universe. He spreads water from His body, and He lies down on His divine snake bed (this snake form is another expansion of the Lord, in the *avesa* category, known as Ananta-sesa).

From His naval , the stem of a lotus flower grows, and within the stem of that lotus flower are the fourteen divisions of planetary systems. The lotus flower on the top is the planet of Brahma, known as Satyaloka.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam (1.3.26) this is described:

*yasyambhasi sayanasya
yoga-nidram vitanvatah
nabhi-hradambujad asid
brahma visva-srjam patih*

“A part of the *purusa* lies down within the water of the universe, from the navel lake of His body sprouts a lotus stem, and from the lotus flower atop this stem, brahma, the master of all engineers in the universe, becomes manifest.”

Within each universe Garbhodakasayi Vishnu is present and He maintains each universe and tends to its needs. Although He is within the material universes, the influence of material energy cannot touch Him.

He is worshipped as the Hiranyagarbha (golden source) Supersoul, He is the master of the universe. The vedic hymns describe Him as one having thousands of heads. The universe is described as a form of this Vishnu - *virat rupa* (gigantic form).

Ksirodakasayi Vishnu - the third *purusa* incarnation.

The third incarnation of Vishnu, Ksirodakasayi Vishnu resides on the island known as Sveta-dvipa (white island) in the middle of the ocean of milk within the universe. He is the Supersoul of all living entities (seated in their heart) and all material objects (seated in every atom).

He is an expansion of Garbhodakasayi Vishnu and from Him all incarnations within the universe are expanded.

visnos tu trini rupani

*purusakhyany atho viduh
ekam tu mahatah srastr
dvitiyam tv anda-samsthitam
tritiyam sarva-bhuta-stham
tani jnatva vimucyate*

“For material creation, Lord Krishna’s plenary expansion assumes three Vishnus. The first one, Maha-Vishnu, creates the total material energy, known as the mahat-tattva. The second, Gabhodakasayi Vishnu, enters into all the universes to create diversities in each of them. The third, Ksirodakasayi Vishnu, is diffused as the all-pervading Supersoul in all the universes and is known as Paramatma. He is present even within the atoms. Anyone who knows these three Vishnus can be liberated from material entanglement.”

2) **Lila avataras:**

A list of *lila avataras* (pastime incarnations) is given in the Srimad Bhagavatam:

- 1) Kumaras
- 2) Narada
- 3) Varaha
- 4) Matsya
- 5) Yajna
- 6) Nara-Narayana
- 7) Kardami
- 8) Dattatreya
- 9) Hayasirsa
- 10) Hamsa
- 11) Dhruvapriya or Prsniggarbha
- 12) Rsabha
- 13) Prthu
- 14) Nrsmha
- 15) Kurma

- 16) Dhanvantari
- 17) Mohini
- 18) Vamana
- 19) Bhargava Parasurama
- 20) Ramacandra
- 21) Vyasa
- 22) Pralambhari Balarama
- 23) Krishna
- 24) Buddha
- 25) Kalki

Out of these Hamsa and Mohini are momentary incarnations within the material world. They do not reside in the spiritual realm.

Kapila, Dattatreya, Rsabha and Dhanvantari are eternal forms from the spiritual realm and are more celebrated.

Kurma, matsya, Nara-narayana, Varaha, Hayasirsa, Prsnigarbha and Balarama are considered as *vaibhava* (expansions of emotion) incarnations.

Krishna is confirmed as the source of all these incarnations:

*ete camsa-kalah pumsah
krishnas tu bhagavan svayam
indrari-vyakulam lokam
mrdyanti yuge yuge*

“All of the above-mentioned incarnations are either plenary portions or portions of plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Sri Krishna is the original Personality of Godhead. All of them appear on planets whenever there is a disturbance created by the atheists. The Lord incarnates to protect the theists.”

- Srimad Bhagavatam 1.3.28

3) **Guna avataras:**

For the purpose of creation, maintenance and annihilation of the universe, the Lord incarnates qualitatively, as in-charge of the three material qualities, viz., goodness, passion and ignorance.

Goodness: The third *purusa* incarnation, Ksirodakasayi Vishnu acts as the incarnation in the mode of Goodness also, even though He is always situated above the modes. He is the master of the mode of goodness in each universe. But in no way in touch with the influence of the modes.

Passion: Garbhodakasayi Vishnu directly empowers a very qualified living entity (*jiva*) as the primal living entity of the universe, to be the chief engineer of the creation. He is

known as Brahma. He is manifested from Garbhobakasayi Vishnu on the lotus that emanates from Vishnu's naval. In the Brahma samhita Brahma is likened to valuable jewels influenced by the rays of the sun, and Garbhodaka Vishnu is that sun.

If there is no suitable living entity capable of serving as Brahma, Garbhodakasayi Vishnu Himself expands as Brahma for creation within the universe.

Ignorance: By expanding as Lord Siva, the Lord becomes the annihilator of the universe when needed. Lord Siva in association with Maya, (the external material energy of the Lord) has many forms , which are categorically numbered at eleven, known as *rudras* (angry person)

Lord Siva is not one of the living entities (like Brahma). He is more or less, Krishna Himself. The example of milk and yogurt is given in this regard. Yogurt is a preparation out of milk , but still in that form it cannot be used for the purpose of milk.

Similarly in the Rudra aspects of Lord Siva , who is a *guna avatara* of Krishna, one cannot seek spiritual restoration as one can from Krishna. The essential difference is that Lord Siva as in-charge of the department of annihilation is in connection with the material nature, whereas Vishnu or Krishna has nothing to do with the material nature.

*siva sakti-yuta sasvat
tri-lingo guna-samvrtah
vaikarikas taijasas ca
tamasas cety aham tridha*

“Lord Siva is always united with his personal energy, the material nature. Manifesting Himself in three features in response to the entreaties of nature’s three modes, he thus embodies the threefold principle of material ego in goodness, passion and ignorance.”

4) **Manvantara avataras:**

Brahma's day - 1,000 *catur yugas* - is divided into fourteen periods of the rule of Manus (fathers of mankind) known as *manvantaras*. The incarnations during these *manvantaras* are listed as follows:

- 1) Yajna
- 2) Vibhu
- 3) Satyasena
- 4) Hari
- 5) Vaikuntha
- 6) Ajita
- 7) Vamana
- 8) Sarvabhauma
- 9) Rsabha
- 10) Visvaksena

- 11) Dharma
- 12) Sudhama
- 13) Yogesvara
- 14) Brhadbhanu

Yajna and Vamana are also *lila avataras*. All the fourteen of them are *vaibhava* category.

Manus, the fathers of mankind and the rulers of the manvantaras, are also incarnations of Krishna in the category of manvantara avataras. There are fourteen manus in a day of Brahma. In the life time of Brahma there are 504,000 Manus. Each Manu of the fourteen are described by a different name:

- 1) **Svayambhuva Manu**, son of Brahma;
- 2) **Svarocisa Manu**, the son of Agni, the fire god;
- 3) **Uttama Manu**, the son of King Priyavrata;
- 4) **Tamasa Manu**, the brother of Uttama Manu;
- 5) **Raivata Manu**, the brother of Tamasa;
- 6) **Caksusa Manu**, the brother of Tamasa, but son of Caksu;
- 7) **Vaivasvata Manu**, the son of Vivasvan, the sun god (the present Manu);
- 8) **Savarni Manu**, also a son of sun god, born of wife Chaya;
- 9) **Daksasavarni Manu**, the son of Varuna;
- 10) **Brahmasavarni Manu**, the son of Upasloka;
- 11) **Rudrasavarni** 12) **Dharmasavarni** 13) **Devasavarni** and 14) **Indrasavarni** Manus are all sons of Upasloka.

5) **The Yuga Avataras:**

There are four *yugas* which come in cycles:

Satya yuga, lasting 1,728,000 years
Treta yuga, lasting 1,296,000 years
Dwapara yuga, lasting 864,000 years
Kali yuga, lasting 432,000 years

In each of these *yugas* the Lord incarnates with a different body colour according to the *yuga*.

*asan varnas trayo hy asya
grhnato 'nuyugam tanuh
suklo raktas tatha pita
idanim krishnatam gatah*

“Krishna appears as an incarnation in every millennium. In the past, He assumed three different colors - white, red and yellow - and now he has appeared in a blackish color.”
- Srimad Bhagavatam 10.8.13

In the Satya yuga a white avatara appeared to Kardama muni to establish meditation as the process for self-realization.

In the Treta yuga a red avatara appeared to Brahma to establish fire sacrifice as the process for self-realization.

In the Dvapara yuga a dark avatara (Krishna) appeared as the son of Devaki to establish temple worship as the process for self-realization.

In the Kali yuga a Yellow avatara appeared (Chaitanya Mahaprabhu) as the son of Saci Mata to establish the chanting of the holy names (nama-sankirtana) as the process for self-realization.

6. Saktyavesa avataras - Empowered Incarnations

There is no limit to the number of *saktyavesa* incarnations. But some are mentioned in the vedic literatures as examples. They are of two kinds, direct and indirect.

When the Lord Himself expands displaying a particular power of His opulences He is known as *Saksat*.

When He empowers a living entity with some particular *sakti* - power, for some specific activity, to represent Him, that living entity is called indirect or *avesa* incarnation.

Type Name Empowered with

Avesa incarnations:

Four Kumaras empowered with knowledge.

Narada empowered with devotional service.

Brahma empowered with creative power.

King Pritu empowered with power to maintain living beings.

Parasurama empowered with power to kill evil elements.

Saksat incarnations:

Sesa (snake with Garbhodakasayi Vishnu) empowered with power to sustain the planets.

Ananta (snake with Ksirodakasayi Vishnu and other expansions) empowered to serve the Lord.

Sometimes a single incarnation will simultaneously be more than one category. To cite examples, Lord Sri Ramacandra is both within the *lila avatar* and the *yuga avatar* categories. Similarly Lord Varaha is also simultaneously within the *lila avatar* and the *yuga avatar* categories.

Apart from the specific six categories of *avatars*, there is also a distinct category known as *Vibhuti* - special favor from the Lord. Any living entity who is exceptionally strong, beautiful, knowledgeable, wealthy, famous and renowned should be known to be specially favored by the Lord.

There are two features to be studied in understanding the incarnations of the Lord.

The principal feature called personality and the marginal feature called function or activity. In the Vedic scriptures there are descriptions of the characteristics of the body of an incarnation, and this is the principal feature by which an incarnation is identified.

The activities of the incarnation are the marginal features.

All the incarnations are mentioned in the scriptures. The features of the incarnation and the particular type of mission which He has to execute are mentioned. The great sages, by the symptoms mentioned, declare an incarnation.

The innumerable incarnations of the Lord are manifested all over the universes constantly, without cessation, as water flows constantly from waterfalls. Their presence is just like the sun in the sky, even if it is not seen from one place, it is always there, and thus the scriptures describe the pastimes of the incarnations as eternal.

Prahlad Maharaj, in his prayer to the incarnation Lord Narasimha says, “You manifest as many incarnations as there are species of life, namely aquatics, plants, reptiles, birds, beasts, men, and the demigods, just for the maintenance of the faithful and the annihilation of the unfaithful. You advent yourself in this way in accordance with the necessity of the different yugas. In the Kali yuga you incarnate garbed as a devotee”

(This devotee incarnation is Lord Chaitanya, who is explicitly mentioned in many scriptures.)

*idam bhagavatam nama
puranam brahma-sammitam
uttama-sloka-caritam
cakara bhagavan rsih
nihsreyasaya lokasya
dhanyam svasty-ayanam mahat*

“This Srimad Bhagavatam is the literary incarnation of God, and it is compiled by Srila Vyasadeva, the incarnation of God. It is meant for the ultimate good of all people, and it is all-successful, all blissful and all-perfect.”

- Srimad Bhagavatam 1.3.40

In the Srimad Bhagavatam there are selected histories of great devotees who are in direct contact with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There are descriptions of various incarnations of the Lord. One can derive the ultimate blessings of the Lord and His

devotees by careful and patient study of this literature. Thus this sound form of Sri Krishna is also considered as an incarnation and worshiped as respectfully as one will worship the Lord and His incarnations.

It is defined as *brahma sammitam* because it is the sound representative of Brahman. It is the sound representative of the Lord. Bhagavad gita which is spoken by the Lord (whose sound is non different from Him) and the Srimad Bhagavatam spoken by the empowered incarnation of the Lord, Vyasa, about the activities of the Lord and His devotees (these descriptions are also non different from Him) are both incarnations of the Lord , in the form of transcendental sound vibrations revealing timeless wisdom to the conditioned souls.

One can desire from the study of the Bhagavatam all benefits that are possible to be derived from the personal presence of the Lord and His incarnations.

*nigama-kalpa taror galitam phalam
suka-mukhad amrta-drava samyutam
pibata bhagavatam rasam alayam
muhur aho rasikabhuvibhavukah*

“O expert and thoughtful men, relish Srimad Bhagavatam, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Sri Sukadeva Gosvami. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls.”

As the Lord is all light, all bliss and all perfection, so also is Srimad Bhagavatam . One can have all the transcendental light of the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna and His incarnations from the recitation of this sound incarnation of the Lord provided it is done perfectly.

There are two forms of the Srimad Bhagavatam: one is the book and the other is a person, known as *bhagavata*, the transparent teacher of Srimad Bhagavatam who is a pure devotee of the Lord, in the highest platform of self realization.

Only from the person *bhagavata*, one can understand the lessons of book Bhagavatam perfectly.

The person *bhagavata* leads his life in terms of the book Bhagavatam. The Bhagavatam book and the person *bhagavata* are thus identical. The messenger and the messages of the Lord are non different from Him. Whenever the messenger of the Supreme Personality of Godhead undertakes offenseless glorification and hearing of the Lord , He is present there in the form of transcendental sound , which has the same power as the Lord.

The Lord is so kind to the living beings that He is present before them in the form of transcendental sound vibration. Apart from the messages of the literary incarnation, Srimad Bhagavatam, He is present in His holy names. These holy names have all the

potencies of the Lord endowed by Him. Therefore the innumerable names of the Lord are also incarnations in sound form.

The taste for hearing and chanting the holy sound incarnations of the Lord is developed through the medium of service to the pure transparent *bhagavata* devotee of the Lord as described in the Srimad Bhagavatam (1.2.18):

*nasta-prayusv abhadresu
nityam bhagavata-sevaya
bhagavatya uttam-sloke
bhaktir bhavati naisthiki*

“By regular attendance in classes on the Bhagavatam and by rendering service to the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is almost completely destroyed, and loving service unto the Personality of Godhead, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact.”

Common reasoning may fail to understand this process of serving the person *bhagavata* and the book Bhagavatam for the purpose of gradual promotion on the path of devotion which bestows the association with the Lord Himself. But great sages like Narada , who are the authorities on the subject confirm that the more progress is made in devotional service under the guidance of the person *bhagavata* , the more one becomes fixed in the transcendental loving service of the Lord Himself.

In the modern age (five centuries ago) Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu preached the sound incarnation Srimad Bhagavatam by practical demonstration as a person *bhagavata*. By His causeless mercy it has become easier to penetrate into the topics of the Srimad Bhagavatam.

Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the selfsame Lord Sri Krishna. In this incarnation, however, He appeared as a great devotee *bhagavata* of the Lord, in order to preach to the people in general, as well as religionists and philosophers, about the transcendental position of Sri Krishna the primeval Lord and the cause of all causes, based on the book Bhagavatam.

The essence of His teachings is that:

- 1) Lord Sri Krishna, who appeared in Vrajabhumi (Vrindavana) as the son of the King of Vraja (Nanda Maharaja) is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore worshipable by all.
- 2) Vrindava dhama is nondifferent from the Lord, because the name, form, and place where the Lord manifests Himself are all identical with the Lord as absolute knowledge. Therefore Vrindavana dhama is as worshipable as the Lord.
- 3) The highest form of transcendental worship of the Lord was exhibited by the *gopis*

(cowherd girls) of Vrajabhumi in the form of pure affection for the Lord, and this process is the most excellent mode of worship.

4) Srimad Bhagavatam, the sound form of the Lord, is the spotless purana (book of history) for understanding the Lord.

5) The ultimate goal of life for all living beings is to attain the stage of *prema* (love of God).

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the *yuga avatara* of the age of Kali. He is both Bhagavan and Bhagavatam in person and in sound.

Therefore His process of approaching the Srimad Bhagavatam is practical for all people of the world. It was His wish that people worldwide should be given an opportunity to hear the sound incarnations of the Lord, viz., the holy names of Krishna and the Srimad Bhagavatam.